

**CABINET**

**2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014**

**REPORT TITLE –PROPOSED INTERIM USE OF HOMELESSNESS GRANT FOR 2014/15**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Margaret Sherrey
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Sue Hanley – Director Of Leisure, Environment and Community Services/ Deputy Chief Executive
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government has allocated homelessness grant funding to local authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness.
- 1.2 The annual grant to BDC, allocated through Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has been used each year since 2002 to fund a range of homelessness support services and schemes that focus upon the prevention of homelessness and repeat homelessness, which plays a role in meeting the Council's strategic purpose 'help me to find somewhere to live in my locality'.
- 1.3 DCLG has awarded BDC £112,830 homelessness grant for 2014/15. The estimated balance to be carried forwards from 2013/14 is £13,088.
- 1.4 This report seeks Member approval for the full or quarterly award of homelessness grant to specific prioritised schemes in 2014/15 as recommended by the Strategic Housing Manager.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That full or quarterly payment for schemes during 2014/15 be approved, as recommended by the Strategic Housing Manager, to receive funding from the Council's homelessness grant for 2014/15., with a further report on the performance of schemes funded during 2013/14 and a recommendation regarding any remaining unallocated grant subsequently coming to Cabinet on 5th June 2014.
- 2.2 That officers refresh the policy and procedure for the allocation of DCLG Homelessness Grant funding for 2015/16 allocation.

**3. KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 In previous years, the allocation of the homelessness grant has been fairly routine business for the Council, but in the last six months, reaching decisions about how best to use this funding has proved far more challenging. Worcestershire County Council's Future Lives agenda is leading towards considerable changes in the housing related support landscape, and there has been significant uncertainty about the future for a number of providers currently operating in Bromsgrove. This has meant decisions about homelessness grant funding have had to be delayed pending further developments within the Future Lives agenda.
- 3.2 However, since mid-March, the financial position for providers in Bromsgrove has become clearer, as have the transitional arrangements being made available to them by the County Council, so Bromsgrove District Council is now in a better position to make decisions about how best to utilise this year's homelessness grant.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding the complexities brought about by the Future Lives agenda, bids for the homelessness grant, when combined with committed expenditure, mean that the grant is still over-subscribed for 2014/15. As a result careful consideration is required about the best way to manage these competing dynamics, and this report recommends prioritising some bids above others in terms of funding from the homelessness grant.

**4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 None specifically – the homelessness grant is currently allocated on a yearly basis to support the Local Authority to tackle homelessness locally. It should be noted that the homelessness grant has also been provisionally earmarked as a resource with which to fund any system changes to housing allocations in Bromsgrove under the Localism agenda.

**5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Prevention of homelessness through the initiatives and schemes developed and funded through DCLG homelessness grant assists the Council in meeting its statutory duties to homeless applicants under the Homeless provisions of the Housing Act 1996, and the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002.

**6. Service / Operational Implications**

- 6.1 Table 1 outlines 4 items of committed expenditure within the homelessness grant, and Table 2 outlines the 6 bids received for

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funding from the homelessness grant for 2014/15, These 6 bids were evaluated by the Housing Strategy team. As a result there are 3 bids for existing services recommended for prioritising for immediate support with quarterly payments, to support Bromsgrove District Council's strategic purposes, help reduce the risks associated with homelessness and provide value for money outcomes. This leaves £26,384 unspent from the homelessness grant, with the remaining 3 bids still being considered. Further information and recommendations on these remaining bids will be provided to Cabinet in June 2014.

### Anticipated Amount of Homelessness Grant for 2014/15

Estimated carry forward from 2013/14	£ 13,088
Homelessness grant award for 2014/15	£112,830
Total grant available:	£125,918

### Table 1 Committed Expenditure 2014/15

BDHT Housing Options Service – home visits	£15,000
County Homelessness Coordinator	£3,500
Night Assessment Centre	£3,000
Step Up BDC private sector scheme salary	£13,934
Total committed expenditure	£35,434

### Table 2 Bids received for remaining grant of £90,484

Overview of bids prioritised and recommended for approval	Amount	Quarterly payment recommended?	Available funding remaining running total
<b>CAB Home Owner/Housing Options Fast Track Service</b> – to continue to provide a specialist advice and advocacy service to homeowners either at risk of repossession or in mortgage arrears. In addition a Fast Track Financial Affordability Assessment service will be offered to help the Council make suitability decisions in respect of private sector offers.	£17,600	Yes	£72,884
<b>Basement Drop-In</b> Aim to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness by	£25,000	Yes	£47,884

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exploring options such as mediation, referral to Nightstop, referral for supported accommodation and other providers. In addition to housing, young people are offered assistance to access benefits, education and employment and one to one support to develop independent living skills, access health services, workshops ie; healthy eating, budget management, IT skills etc. The Drop in has facilities such as a washing machine, shower cubicle and kitchen area.			
<b>St Basils mYPlace scheme</b> The St Basils mYPlace scheme helps young people aged 18 - 25 to access the private rented sector. They support young tenants with managing and budgeting skills, source furniture, and carry out tenancy health checks during the tenancy. They have developed a good working relationship and reputation with local landlords and ensure the property is suitable against HHSRS standards.	£21,500	Yes	£26,384
<b>Overview of bids currently under further consideration</b>			
<b>BDHT Housing Needs Additional Support (for 1 year)</b> Provision of transformation support for housing options services to facilitate increased time spent with cases and the allocations policy review following any BDC Cabinet decision on future direction.	£10,000	Further information to be provided in June	£16,384
<b>BDHT Step Up Floating Support</b> The provision of housing related support alongside the Step Up private tenancy scheme. Responsive, one to one support	£25,000	Further information to be provided in June	- £8616

to enable vulnerable clients to sustain their tenancy in the private rented sector. Assistance will be given with budgeting, debts, employment, alongside other housing related issues. These aims and ambitions may be varied following the outcome of Step Up transformation.			
<b>County Community Projects Bromsgrove Drop In</b> Create and promote the use of local Drop In centres for people who need to access advice and support relating to housing and homelessness including people with mental health issues. Peer mentors, volunteers and peer support groups will be trained/developed in order to make the service sustainable.	£7,400 for 3 hrs per week	Further information to be provided in June	- £16,016
<b>Total</b>	<b>£106,500</b>		<b>-£16,016</b>

**7. Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 7.1 This grant will benefit the Council's customers, by offering households more options to prevent their homelessness and where possible to enable them to remain in their own homes. The Council will be taking steps to ensure it meets the strategic purpose 'help me find somewhere to live in my locality'.
- 7.2 The grant will also benefit the larger community as opportunities to prevent homelessness will be maximised.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 If the recommended schemes are not approved there is a risk that more households who are threatened with homelessness or who are in housing need will have limited alternative options. There is also the risk that they may have to make a homeless approach and this could consequently lead to the following pressures:
- Increased B&B costs
  - Increased rough sleeping in the District
  - Impacts on health, education and similar through increased homelessness

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9. **APPENDICES**

None

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Worcestershire Future Lives – Worcester County Council

11. **KEY**

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